DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 068 874 CG 007 588

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TITLE A Training Method to Teach Paraprofessionals Peer Counseling.
PUB DATE 27 Mar 72
NOTE 27p.; Paper presented at the American Personnel and Guidance Association Convention, March 25-30, 1972, Chicago, Illinois

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; College Freshmen; *College Students; Counseling; *Counseling Goals; Counselor Qualifications; Educational Counseling; *Group Counseling; *Nonprofessional Personnel; *Peer Groups; Peer Relationship; Training; *Underachievers

ABSTRACT

The training methods used to develop peer counselors to colead counseling groups and provide both remedial and preventive counseling to academically able freshmen who have never performed at a level in keeping with their potential are described. Freshman subjects were selected on a voluntary basis from those who scored in the top quartile in the American College Testing Program, but failed to reach a 2.00 grade point average. The differentiating treatment between the experimental and control groups consisted of a peer-led counseling group experience. The "effect" of the group experience on academic behavior was measured by comparing grade point averages of the experimental and control groups. In addition, follow-up data is to be collected for three consecutive semesters. The major body of this report is a verbatim transcript of some of the group sessions. (Author/BW)

ED 068874

"A TRAINING METHOD TO TEACH PARAPROFESSIONALS PEER COUNSELING"

American Personnel and Guidance
Association National Convention

March 27, 1972

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I. Introduction:

A large percentage of freshmen and sophomores do not perform at minimal levels in the realm of academic achievement. These people do not fail because of inability to perform, or lack of potential, but for other reasons. There is often an accompanying permanent loss of intellectual resource potential, to individual students involved, the university, and society.

Underachievement has been the focus of an extensive amount of research. (Astin, 1964, Beasely, 1957, Curry, 1961, Diasgow, 1957, Goldberg, 1960, Leffler, 1951, McKenzie, 1964, Shaw, 1963.) From these studies it is known that underachievers experience problems in motivation (Riagness, 1965), self acceptance (Broedel, 1960), immaturity (Powell, 1963) and study skills (Brown, 1965). To attempt to help underachieving students both individual and group counseling have been attempted. Bednar (1970), however, in studying the research available concluded, "Group counseling appears to hold more promise as a treatment method than individual counseling methods or academic study courses." Gilbreath (1967) found that a leader structured method of group counseling significantly affects the personality characteristics and academic achievement of male college underachievers while Roth (1967) discovered the grade point averages of a counseling group of underachievers increased significantly and the change held over time. Winborn (1962) and Dickenson (1966) reported similar results. Although Broedel (1960) working with high school students found no academic improvement, he did report significant improvement in self concept.

There is less evidence for use of peer counselors as leaders of the counseling groups. With immaturity (Powell, 1963) and motivation (Ringness, 1965) being important factors in underachievement, and with peer influence being strong in the adolescent sub-culture it would appear that peer counselors could be both modeling and facilitating agents. In fact, Wolff's (1969) results suggested that indigenous subprofessionals <u>can</u> promote growth on a campus in interpersonal relations. Some universities have made initial attempts in the area of peer counseling but they deal only with academic advising and one-to-one relationships (Brown, 1965) Brown & Zunker, 1966). Colleges using student advisors meeting students in highly structured groups had enough success to encourage further exploration of students as peer counselors.

Peer counseling has been primarily used with disadvantaged students. Dyste (1969) and Vriend (1969) reported improved academic achievement among minority group students through peer counseling. Research using peer counselors in the typical setting to minimize the loss of academically able freshmen, however, has been lacking. We are reporting here on a convention program which demonstrated the training methods used to develop peer counselors to co-lead counseling groups and provide both remedial and preventive counseling to academically able freshman who have never performed at a level in keeping with their potential. These freshman (both experimental and control groups) were selected on a volutary basis from first semester freshman who scored in the top quartile in the ACT testing program, but failed to reach a 2.00 G.P.A. The differentiating treatment between the experimental and control groups consisted of a peer-led counseling group experience. Both experimental and control groups had opportunity to be involved in <u>any</u> student activities on the

campus that are available to any university students. The "effect" of the group experience on academic behavior was measured by comparing grade point averages of the experimental and control groups. This comparison was made at the end of the semester in which the experimental group had the peer-led group counseling experience. In addition follow up data will be collected for 3 consecutive semesters following the semester that the experimental group had the peer-led group counseling experience. Follow up data on both experimental and control groups will be studied for comparison, using appropriate statistical analysis.

The detailed nature of the experimental design, and results of the total project are currently being prepared for publication. The emphasis of this paper is to present, as we did at the APGA Convention in March, 1972, the training model used to prepare the peer counselors to co-lead the groups for academic underachievers. The convention presentation was designed with the following goals in mind: (1) We wished to communicate the kind of experiential learning model that we use when training co-leaders. We chose to do that by having the audience participate as if they were college juniors or seniors being trained to do peer counseling.; (2) We then had the convention program participants go through 2 specific training exercises that we use as an integral part of the training for the peer leaders. Our goal here was to have participants become not only aware of the techniques for their own sake but (and we believe this is the most important aspect) also the techniques as an integral part of the training process. The total process in our training involves learning about interpersonal relationships and the peer-counselor within the relationship functioning as the instrument of change. The latter is our "technique" to facilitate change via counseling relationships, as opposed to the training techniques mentioned earlier.

II. Guide to the typescript:

The accompanying typescript is divided into two sections. The first section is the typescript of Dr. Meyer and Dr. Mullen describing: (1) the selection process of peer-counselors for training; (2) the training model used; (3) discussion of the interpersonal learning of affect; and (4) the instructions to convention participants to form groups and experience the training model. The second section of the typescript is the verbatim record of one of the groups at the convention, experiencing the training model. This is divided into three sub-sections. The first sub-section deals with participants learning the differentiation and identification of feelings as varying people present them in the ways they relate to each other. The second sub-section deals with participants role-playing a training session, where two participants role-play peer-counselors and the other participants role play college freshman who are academic underachievers. The third subsection consists of all participants discussing the two training experiences with their trainers. In this case the trainers at the convention program were 2 students that had been trained as peer-leaders and were co-leading a group during 1971-72. Their names are "Jr", and "Sali" and they are identified by those names heading any statement they made which appears in the typescript. The convention program coordinators (Marilyn Meyer and John Mullen) will be identified by the title "male program coordinator", and "female program coordinator" throughout the body of the typescript. Conven-

tion participants who role play peer counselors in the second subsection of the typescript will be identified by the title "peer counselor". Other convention participants who are role playing college freshmen will not be identified in the second subsection.

III. Typescript:

Female program coordinator: We're really very happy to welcome all of you to the program this afternoon. As you have noticed in the abstract this will be an experiential kind of program, but first we would like to set the stage in terms of talking about why we got involved in this project at all. Both of us enjoy very much working with groups and the developmental groups, personal development. That has been an interest of ours for several years, uh, we have a strong interest in training and so the two seem to fit together very well. The students we've had in these personal growth groups or developmental groups, many of them were asking for another kind of experience. It was out of this then that we came upon the idea of combining all of these interests and the needs of the students to work into the peer-led counseling activities. We chose the model that we're going to talk about today to capitalize on the sensitivities of the students, uh, their lack of the didactic background, which incidently we find to be an advantage and one that we could have fun with. There are many other models that can be used, but this is one that we both enjoy and find successful and therefore present it to you in that particular framework.

Male program coordinator: First thing I want to talk about to you today is the selection of the students that we trained in this program and we have three primary criteria. The first one was that each person that we issued an invitation to had previously been a member of a developmental group so that they had the experience of being a group member. We felt, as Marilyn just mentioned, this was a really crucial, uh, prerequisite to being in this training program so that they would understand from the basis of having had the experience what it was like to be a group member and to be in a developmental group where your trying to explore yourself and your own human development. The second criteria for these students were that they have had an active interest in doing work and/or getting training for further work involving them working with people, uh, in work where they will need to be sensitive in relationships. For example, many of these students have been on the residence hall staffs here at the university, in fact most of them in this program, or they are people who are going into areas such as social work, or psychology, or education areas where you really need to be constructive and sensitive in human relationships to help people develop. Finally, the third criterion that was very necessary was that in addition to the previous two, these be people that Marilyn and I judged as personally able to benefit from a training experience and who we also saw as mature enough to conduct the peer counseling groups. Now I'd like to talk to you a little bit about the interpersonal or relationship training model. And to start with I want to define just very briefly some of the terms. First of all, I would like to define interpersonal as we are using it here. When we talk about interpersonal here the technique involved in this interpersonal model is yourself as the group leader who is one person in a relationship,

in other words, you experiencing that relationship are the technique. We encourage the people we train, and we teach them, to use themselves as an "instrument". The way they use themselves as an instrument is through their ability to perceive what is happening to their feelings and to the feelings of other people that they're involved in relationships with. In this instance the relationships are in the groups they lead. Okay. The next thing that I would like to define would be the discovery method. In other words, as a person being trained here you first learn what happens at an interpersonal level, in other words, you learn what happens with your feelings and with other peoples feelings and how those emotions get communicated in that relationship by being in the relationship. Now, we do this in several ways. First of all you experience it in a role-playing situation where we have the people in the training program and us play different roles, for example being leaders, being underacheivers or group members and in this way begin to learn and identify the feelings and so forth that's involved.

Female program coordinator: The creativity in the roles is, uh, humorous, enlightning and very helpful. I can remember where students who had decided that they are from towns such as Pelican Lake or some other little town, and so the students become very comfortable with the roles, in fact they create so many that the second semester they'll come back to supervision many times and say, "O-oo, there was somebody just like you in our group" and find this extremely helpful cause they experience most kinds of problems in the role playing situations before they become real ones.

Male program coordinator: In response to what Marilyn was just saying there, one thing that we've been struck by. We feel that this method not only teaches people more quickly to be effective group leaders or counselors, uh, but also more effectively, rather than just more quickly, is for example, that they have first lived it in the role playing situation, in the training situation, then you discover it in the group, as she just mentioned where they come back and say oh so and so was just like the one you role played. The other thing that I want to mention here is they also discover how things fit into a meaningful conceptual framework, because again they can say, "Oh, when I read in my psychology book" or "in my education and human development course" they talk about someone being angry but showing it in a funny way, like in my psych book it's labeled passive-aggressive, but they say, "Oh, that's what that means, that's just like so and so, that's the way somebody behaves and acts and lives." In that way, we found this training method to have much more impact. I'll summarize it up by saying it's an inductive teaching process rather than a deductive one. Now, moving on, to the fact that we have two parts of the interpersonal learning of affect or feelings. And the two parts are, first of all becoming aware of your own affect and how you handle it in a relationship and second, becoming aware of how others handle their affect. Now, going into detail about the first part, how do I handle my own affect? Feelings, loneliness, anger, anxiety, love, etc. Okay, when I know how I handle my own affect, I can understand having different feelings, in other words, I know what it's like. And I can possibly be able to perceive various feelings in others and perhaps understand many of the different ways they might experience their own feelings.

Female program coordinator: An example of the insight was one of our training group members who toward the end of the training semester said, with great excitement, "I now understand that if I know and am in touch with my own feelings that's what enables me to hear of them from others". And it's that experiencing thing that made that whole concept real for that student.

Male program coordinator: And for example, just as a brief preview of what you folks are gonna experience today for example, one of the ways that you discover how you handle your own feelings and how you handle them differently is within our training groups, uh, we go around and in initial meetings spend a lot of time just discussing what we each do with our own feelings. For example, the different ways that myself or Marilyn might handle anger or any other people in the training program might handle anger. Okay, now the second part that Marilyn is gonna talk to you about is "how I receive other people's feelings."

Female program coordinator: In this regard we try to help the students observe both what he does and what he says in terms of the group member so it was paying attention to words and feelings and the nonverbal kinds of behavior. Such things as when one of the group might move back their chair back out of, out of the group, but it is attending behavior to use the professional language it's what we teach them in terms of the picking up the cues from other people. The other cue is what impact does that person, does that person have on me, what feelings arise in myself as I interact with that person and how do I use those feelings then to understand the other person more effectively.

Male program coordinator: I think an example when you talk about that Marilyn, would be something that happened in a role playing situation in our training group last year, where the role was played where the girl, the group leader came in feeling pretty good, uh, and feeling like they wanted to be understanding, they wanted to listen, uh, they wanted to be helpful just as a human being that day. And, the group kinda got focused on one individual and it seemed like every time he talked that he was constantly asking for help and people were offering help and that every time they offered help he said "Yes, but that won't work". So, after many yes, buts--they began to be aware, especially the one group leader, that he felt rather depressed, kind of irratated, angry and we were able to use that then to explore what had been going on with the other person.

Female program coordinator: The other thing in regard to that is the differential feelings of the co-leaders. One leader might have one feeling and to help the co-leaders know that they may well indeed pick up two different kinds of feelings and that both are accurate in terms of thinking about one client, uh, that one leader was angry and the other was feeling the person was lonely. And they could check that out in terms of helping them see that indeed the person was feeling both feelings. And so that the co-leaders can then learn how to pick up differential feelings and not be critical or judgemental of each other or themselves for having differential feelings but learning how to use them within the group setting. Well, this basically is the experiential model that we have used in the training approach, but we'd like you to spend most the time today experiencing that training model yourself. So, in that regard we would like to have you, uh, volunteer, we'd like to have two groups of six volunteers each. We'd like the volunteers to be themselves as they were in college. So we'll have two training groups and the rest of the audience you can divide up and be observers around those two groups. Now, if you do volunteer we'd like you to imagine yourself as that senior who has had a group experience and have volunteered to be in the training group. Each group will have two experiences, one on the differentiation of feelings, it will be anxiety specifically, and one as a group of underachievers. Now the four students that we have with you whom we have trained will act as your trainers; in essence, they will train you in the same way that we trained them. It's terribly important that you volunteers put aside your professional training and put yourself back as an undergrad. So, if you'll divide up into groups now, the trainers will take over from here.

Sali: Well, we'd like to welcome you all here, and I think first we'll start with introductions. I'm Sali and this is my co-leader, Junior. John. I'm Al. MarySue. Pat. Elaine. Vern. Okay--let's go around with the names again. I didn't get everybody and we have to talk louder. I'm Sali and this is Junior. John. I'm Al. I'm MarySue. I'm Pat. Elaine. Vern. Okay. You've all been invited here because you have experienced a group experience such as a dynamic group, developmental group and you've been found to be very sensitive, aware of your feelings, other peoples feelings in that group and you interacted very well with them and in this way because of this experience you have been invited to this group. Uh------another thing we want you to interact like we're going to be talking about our feelings of anxiety right now. How we handle them. Um--maybe how you can pick up other people being anxious. Um--I know maybe we could start telling how I handle mine. Usually when I'm anxious I talk very fast and get kinda vivacious and alota gestures. Um--I move alot. I kinda try and keep my mind off it but yet it's always there and I'll try and talk about something else, but I, but it's still within me. It motivates me though.

Junior: Well, uh, for myself I tend to get a motor mouth. Uh--I'll talk about things that are really trivial things that are unimportant just so there's a conversation going. I'll smoke alot of cigarettes or sometimes

I'll shake a leg or a finger or an arm. You'll notice I'm leaning against my legs now so I can't uh--or anything just to keep myself busy. I have to be busy when I'm anxious.

Sali: Oh--before we go on, uh, we are playing like you are juniors or seniors in college and how you handled it then might be a little different than how you handle it now.

I try to act real cool. Uh, I'm real relaxed ya know like I'm not anxious.

Do you find it works?

Well, I fool some people.

Junior: I---I try to do that. I---I always give myself away by smoking too much but, you know, I'll try to act like I know uh what's going on and that, that I'm not really anxious, uh, but that really backfires um because if I succeed in fooling people that I'm really not anxious then I don't get any support. So nobody is really able to help me out they think, oh, he's okay.

If people notice me then I get carried away like you do, ya know, and I'm putting on a performance and if nobody notices me then I get all folded up, you know crossing my hands and legs and go back in the corner. But, if somebody gives me a cue, ya know, you're on, then I'm off and running.

Uh--I sweat. And I grin alot. I uh--and I think people can tell that I'm nervous because I look like I'm nervous.

I'm anxious right now. If I--If I had a paper clip I'd be tearing it to pieces.

Junior: I survive. I try and smoke but then I always have that first problem of trying to light the cigarette without somebody noticing that your shaking.

What is it that is making you anxious right now?

Being watched. People watching us.

Me too. I'm really aware of all kinds of eyes that are staring at us.

Sali: MarySue I was interested in your comment. Do you look for people to be with you when you are anxious? To notice your anxiousness. To bring you out of it? or--

Uh--Well, yeah, underneath it I wish they would, but I don't give cues on the outside that would, you know, tell people that's what I want. And, I said act the opposite of what I feel.

We're--I--I'm expressing my feelings here of being anxious, but I guess that's what you wanted us to do. You wanted us to pretend we were back when we were in high school--er--college. So I'm not sure whether I'm doing what I should be doing here.

Sali: Well, I think maybe it's like-um-when you feel anxious what do you do with it at anytime, um, how did you handle your anxiety like in college like there was a big exam and you were going through finals and had a really a big strain on your mind. How do you -- how do you cope with it then?

Junior: Yeah--maybe that would help if you all went through--say we're, we have a final tomorrow. How would you handle the anxiety back in college as a senior. What would you do for it?

Smoke alot.

Junior: I would too then.

I think I'd find myself taking a lot of study breaks that were, uh, unnecessary at the time.

Oh yeah.

It's like--uh--my concentration isn't that long--uh--I mean I can't take it I have to go talk to somebody about something.

I--I used to look for reenforcement from people around to the point that some one else might be it and I could get some close comfort.

I'd--I study in my own kind of way though, like lie in bed you know stay up all night, and, uh, somehow or other I was just gonna jam it into my head you know. And I'd go over and over and underline and read it again and again.

I--I, uh, couldn't do that I'd have to--I have to be mined, I mean in some rigid position set to go off. I don't know if it's to reenforce it or not. I'd lay down and I'd fidget.

I have to sit up and study.

Junior: One way, I'd look for someone else to support my studying. If someone else was studying all night then I had to take a break and say okay at fibe to two we'll take a break and talk for 10 minutes. Well it usually went 20 or 30 minutes but I mean that's what I need to really get me going.

I think in some ways I'm like Al like going into an exam and have maybe 15 minutes to cram before you get the test and I'll sit there and play it really cool and I'll pull out another book, uh, nothing's bothering me, and, and that way is kinda wrong if I do well anyway, ya know a last minute cram's not gonna help me and then I do play it cool, but it's like if I do have a half an hour before I go to class then it's wow--I'm on the move.

Sali: How did you feel when Vern said he was anxious? I know there was like uh almost total agreement, I'm glad he said it.

Well, it was like he--he named what we were all feeling.

Sali: Uh-uh.

Ya know, it was like okay after that you know. Everybody could feel that way, it wasn't that--

Sali: I don't know if anybody else caught it but it seemed like there was a nervous laugh there, ya know, to relieve it a little bit--which brings us into uh, how can you tell when someone else is anxious? What do ya look for.

Ah--I think I look for a body scrunching. Like when somebody gets uptight I watch to see that their close like you said they move in close to yourself. I think that that means up tight to me and I look for that.

Uh, I think what's happening with their eyes, ya know, kinda shiftin' around.

Junior: John what do you look for?

Well, uh, its uh, sorta rough, I look for people to be active, sorta really cue in on people being very active.

Hyper kinds of activities--

Foot tapping--I really cue in on foot tapping for some reason when she studied.

Well--I have a little object on my desk and ------ It's a little horse and

Can't hear.

A little horse, I have a little horse and every once in awhile I notice they'll uh pick up the horse and pick up a lot of anxiety. They'll roll it around and play with it.

I think one thing I noticed uh it was like someone being quiet but the only thing they said was uh maybe a cutting remark or you know like a laughing type joke not really getting serious and it's kinda their release. I think I do that myself.

Ya, I'll do that sometimes---use humor in that way.

Yeah.

To cut the tension.

It's sorta like here everybody's, ya know, its very superficial and it's--so ya laugh when you get anxious you want to keep things very superficial until you can feel that you can deal with your own anxiety.

Yeah. I--I look for people who--who not some--I guess I'm more sensitive to people who withdraw from, ya know, they handle their anxiety by withdrawing from--ya know, very quiet or kinda sitting on the side of their chair like their gonna jump off any second. And, it's usually like they look like they want to say something, you know, but they're too anxious to say anything, like if you just asked them a question that--they can say something and they feel much better.

Sali: When I feel like I wanna take care of them that gives me a cue to--their state. But I don't know how I read that.

Junior: I think that kinda leads in how can we help like once you sense another person feeling anxious, how can you help them release it, if it, ya know, it's a short term, say you're only together for an hour. Sometimes a person can be anxious for a whole hour and they'll stay and not get, get relaxed at all--how can you help this person kinda alleviate the tension.

I think you could be rather open about it--more or less reflect--I kinda feel like--when that happens to me--I feel less anxious.

Junior: Just confront them with it.

Yeah, I guess just to let it be known that it's okay to be anxious and be in the group and, uh, ya know like I can be anxious and, ya know, so can you and we don't necessarily even have to do a whole lot about that except just ta let it be okay.

I never would've handled it that way when I was in college, I might now to some extent, but I would take care of them and I would smooth it over and I would give them a chance to-----come in in a very indirect way either physically moving or some verbal kinda contribution, ya know, I'd want to help them and I'd set it up so that I, so that they could release their anxiety but I'd do it in a very indirect way.

Sali: Then you're sorta saying that you sorta stroke em alittle and then build them up to a point where then you could maybe without danger release em to that.

I'd open the door alittle so that it wasn't obvious you know that uh what I was doing, ya know, but I think that it would be obvious but I would think that it wasn't.

Sali: And, and what you're saying now is that now you would be more ---

I'd be more

Sali: Direct about it?

I'd be more direct. In some circumstances not in all, I think I'd still use the old behavior sometime.

LONG SILENCE

Sali: Does silence make you anxious?

Sometimes it does, I think it depends on what I think is happening--during the silence.

Sali: I think Junior and I feel comfortable when it's silent, ya know, uh, we're getting to the point where it is comfortable it's not like, uh, you have to keep on talking and, and keep things going all the time.

But were you feeling comfortable in that silence?

I was, I was just gonna, I was waitin to tell you the truth to see who was gonna break it--if anybody would. I was just interested you know for my own personal reasons.

I think if someone had not said something I would have eventually have said something.

I was prepared to sit.

Junior: Okay, now, John will explain what else we're going to do, it'll still be role playing, I know that.

We s'posed to get closer in? 'Cuse me.

Male program coordinator: And again, I know it's hard to do especially when you're caught up in your roles, but would you please try to concentrate on speaking louder it is hard to hear in here. Uh--Okay. What we would now like you to do is first of all stay in your primary role of being juniors and seniors being trained to do peer-counseling. Now, within that we will now be at a training session and what you will now do in your training session is two of the six of you will volunteer to be or role play group leader. This will be two of you other than the two of you that are trained, and uh the other six of you will be academic underachievers.

Okay.

Male program coordinator: Okay, do that for about 15 minutes and then we'll cut and then we'd like you to stay in your roles and discuss what heppened in your group. Okay? Go ahead whenever you're ready, if you have any questions.

Junior: Okay, first of all try to remember that you're all still juniors and seniors in college. It's very complicated I know we lost it a couple times last time, and even I was tempted to bring in something that

happened in a group then I had to shut myself up. But, you are a junior and senior in college and now two of you are gonna be playing as trainers like Sally and I are right now this semester, role playing, and the rest of us the other six will be role playing freshman underachievers, these are freshmen that have done well in high school or through their ACT test but they're not doing very well in school for various reasons and those are the kind of students we've had, so we'll be role playing them. Any questions before we start the business of

What you're saying we're not gonna play ourselves, we're gonna play someone else?

Junior: Right.

Sali: Right. You're a junior or senior in college but you're role playing a freshman.

And these are freshmen that are forced to be in

Junior: No, no.

Sali: No, they-they've been asked to partake in a group that could possibly help them--obtain better grades.

So they are students who wanna do better?

Junior: Right

Sali: Supposedly.

They have a--they usually have 2 point or below.

Junior: Okay, now we need two volunteers.

Two volunteers? For the counselors.

Junior: If we don't get two volunteers--

Can we promote volunteers?

(choosing leaders before they start)

Junior: We'll give ya a few minutes to uh, um for those who will be playing underacheiving freshmen, we'll give you a few minutes to get a role together.

Is this the first meeting?

Sali: Uh-um.

Junior: Maybe this will help you. In our first meeting first of all we talked about anxiety like we just did now; then we went right into role playing. Our leader told us that, okay we're gonna be playing roles and you are counselors; that's how we did it the first time.

Sali: Does everybody have a role?

Junior: Take it away.

"Peer counselor": I'm Pat and this is John and uh we're here because we wanna be and you wanna be and we understand that we have kinda common purposes. Um--I'd be interested in knowing, ya know, how each of you got here and the kinds of things that you felt and the kinds of things that went through your mind when uh getting yourself signed up to be here today.

Well, um---

"Peer counselor": Thank you for starting. That made me feel very good to have you start out, appreciate it.

Well, uh--, I didn't do too good in school last semester. I got a couple F's and uh my residence hall counselor told me about this and said it might help to find out how come I didn't do so well and maybe how I could do better. So I--I, I, ya know, it sounded like a good idea, I, I didn't know too much about it so I just came.

"Peer counselor": Do you feel comfortable?

No. No, I don't know, I guess everybody came for the same reason that they didn't do well in school.

I got this phone call and uh I was kinda surprised because it's a pretty big school and I was, ya know, kinda surprised that, ya know, anyone would really know I hadn't done well, and I has kinda curious about something like this. I hadn't done very well first semester and I was, uh, not sure why, but was kinda curious about what could be done.

"Peer counselor": I'd like to have us start sharing some feelings if possible and uh, what were your feelings at the time you got the phone call?

Well, I was surprised, curious, I guess and uh I guess that's about it. Kinda glad.

I went in to see my, I'm in the pre-med program, and I went in to see my advisor and told him that I'm takin' this chemistry class and not gettin' very good marks, matter of fact, looks like I'm gonna fail it, and uh he suggested maybe I might come over here for some groups that I could get into might be helpful to this. So, I figure he worries about me alot; I felt pretty bad about it. So, I need some help, I'd sure like some help.

Are you guys counselors?

"Peer counselor": No we're not.

You getting paid for it?

"Peer counselor": No. We're just students like everyone else here.

You mean that we're still gonna get better grades though if we come here.

"Peer counselor": Well--the better grades are up to you. We, we can offer a way to maybe work towards getting those better grades.

Yeah, but, grades don't mean anything to me, like, um, I'm in fashion design. Well I'm taking like two years of art and then I'm gonna go on to another school, and, uh, I really had a great time last semester, I joined a sorority and I was just, uh, it was just fantastic all the people I met, I was going out every night and I didn't crack any books. Most of them were studio courses where I was doing my drawings and everything, and I thought it was just the teachers fault they just didn't like me or something, I mean, I thought I was really applying my ability and man I really did bad.

Whatcha wanna join a sorority for?

It's a lot of fun.

Oh--They're all snots.

What made you change your mind and come here for help because obviously you've changed you attitude about.

Well, at first I didn't want to come, ya know, because I felt, well, whose to say I need help, but, I talked it over with my parents and they thought well, if I really want to go on to school I definitely have to improve my grades after the, ya know, way I really messed it up last semester, so, they more or less talked me into it, but I wasn't very willing at first.

You said you don't care whether you're getting good grades or not.

No, I--I feel, ya know, that once I go on fashion designing, ya know.

Boy, you're different than me, I gotta get good grades or I won't get into medical school.

I'm on a scholarship, and, I, I just, I can't, I, I

I'm just like you, I

My mother and dad told me that if I didn't make it, boy, they were gonna kick me out of school and cut me off, I, I don't know what I'm gonna do. I tried, I studied, but I can't do it.

"Peer counselor": A couple of you here mentioned your mom and dad; let's talk about your reactions and how you feel about it.

"Peer counselor": I see pressure being applied, in a couple of instances here.

Yeah, but, ya know, you can't cut your mom and dad out of it, ya know, like they're always on your back.

My parents are never on my back, they don't care.

Yeah, mine aren't either; ya know, uh, they didn't go to school and they don't, they don't really care what I do. I, I'm kinda here just, I'm not really sure whether I really want to go or not, I'm just kinda checkin' it out.

Well, I think, uh, my mom and dad had first right to be on my back. I think I, I think I oughta be doing better.

My parents decided what school I was gonna go to, and, uh, I got a scholarship, so they said okay that's the one, ya know, it's a good one, and uh, I, I just don't know what I'm gonna do.

Do ya still let your parents tell you what to do?

Oh yeah, they, they pay my way.

"Peer counselor": Yeah, I, I hear in some cases it's an individual decision to be here, some it's in between, maybe yes maybe no, and in some cases it's, I gotta be here cause it's a forced kinda situation. Um, who do you see yourself most alike in this group.

Well--

"Peer counselor": In terms of why you're here, the kinds of feelings you have about, ya know, whether, how open you are to, or how much you wanna get out of this for your own self.

Oh, I think, we're pretty much alike, cuz, we both, well, I have to make it, my mother's told everybody about my scholarship, and, I, uh, I'm just really gonna be stuck if--

I think I know just how Elaine feels.

"Peer counselor": How do you react to her, ya know, tying in with you, as far as her motivation for being here?

Well, I think, I think we have a lot in common. Although, I don't, I don't feel, I feel like maybe my parents, a little bit more like my parents uh, have a better attitude. It's really what I wanna do really.

Uh uh.

And I kinda feel like, maybe, like I'm not only letting myself down, but, uh, I'm letting them down too, that's why.

Wow, I must be an awful, lousy person, ya know, a real burden, I guess I, I feel kinda free.

Yeah.

Yeah, I do too.

I have to think of my own life, not my parents.

I, ya know, I'm paying my own way, and I guess, ya know, in a way, I feel, you know, that that gives me some freedom, that, I guess, you don't have.

Well, the only thing is, I, I'd really like to go to med school, I really would. That's--And I know about the ability cuz I've taken some tests and they all put me up in the 90th percentile, but, for some reason I just

Ya gonna be a doctor?

Yup.

How long do you have to go to school for that?

Oh--seven years.

I don't know how you can stand it that long.

Why can't parents understand your adjusting to college life, like, I came from, oh, not a real small town but it wasn't very large and the university is so immense, there are so many students there, and, all the opportunities, and going out and meeting people. Can't they understand that it's just an adjustment and they can kinda just over look your bad grades, why do they have to get down on your back, you have something you've accepted, okay, you did bad. And I did bad, and uh, we wanna do better, but why should they be down on your back for that, can't they understand?

In my home, the love that my parents give me depends on my grades.

"Peer counselor": Okay, Elaine just mentioned, you know, something a little more solid about why she wants to get the good grades, and uh, you really didn't come up with much, about why, why do you think you should get the good grades?

Grades still aren't that important to me, I feel people are more important. I don't think grades really show who I am. Some of the times I feel like just a social security number, uh, I don't know, they're still not important.

Is this kinda why we're here? Everybody just to get better grades? Is this why we're kinda in a group?

"Peer counselor": Do you think we all have to be here for the same reason exactly?

I don't know, I guess, I'm just kinda, ya know, kinda wondering, ya know, being in this group, uh, whether that's gonna be what your gonna expect, ya know.

"Peer counselor": The one person I don't know about is you.

What about me?

"Peer counselor": Uh, why you're here, how you got here.

Uh--John Mullen called me and asked me if I wanted to do a group, be in a group, I didn't really have anything better to do, just play cards in the afternoon anyway, I don't really do too much.

"Peer counselor": You're here to pass the time? That's what I'm hearing.

Well, I got nothin' to lose, and, uh, I mean I don't really have

"Peer counselor": You don't, you don't wanna get any better grades?

Well--if it helps me get better grades that's fine, but, heck, I, I don't know what's gonna happen, I don't know what to expect.

Don't you know you have to work to get better grades?

Uh, I don't know, I'm undecided.

"Peer counselor": Ya mean, you mean you don't care, about what kind you do?

Well I care, if I get good grades, fine, but, uh, I'm not gonna spend all my time studying--there's better things to do.

"Peer counselor": Ya mean, you mean you don't feel bad when you get a bad grade?

No. It doesn't bother me.

But, it depends on how much I study. If I study hard, get it altogether, then I feel bad.

What if you flunked out, rejected?

I'd just go into my Dad's business.

"Peer counselor": How do you feel about helping other people, with their concerns?

You mean if I'm gonna help other people?

"Peer counselor": Uh-uh.

Well, I don't know, I hadn't really thought about helping other people, I didn't know what to expect in this group, I mean someone called me up and asked me if I wanted to come in and I said sure, I didn't care, I mean, I didn't know what it was going to be like. I might know somebody else here.

Well, how can you and John help us get better grades, like, all of us must be in different fields, and all of us with entirely different teachers, like teachers are my problem right now. I think they're really down on me. I, I don't draw the way they want me to draw and, I don't think it's fair that they should lower my grade because of that. I just, I can't understand, you know, like, how you can help us, you better students.

"Peer counselor": Are you trying to blame your teachers?

Yeah. Because I believe, well I had excellent grades in all my art classes in high school and I come up here and uh

"Peer counselor": I'm feeling very anxious now because I, I'm feeling that you're expecting me and John to give you answers.

Solutions

And, uh, somehow or other, ya know, where is the group if that's what's going to happen.

Yeah, but, who, who is going to give us the answer. I mean, I, I need answers in the worst way.

"Peer counselor": Can you think of one thing you've learned so far in terms of how you're feeling about yourself or how you're feeling here today or how you're feeling about your studies. Just one new insight or feeling?

I don't know, I just, I'm still feeling like I, I don't know where to turn or where to go.

Well, I kinda, think we have something in common, ya know, don't we? Heck, I didn't think there was anybody doin' the same kinda thing I was doin'.

I still don't know how to get better grades.

Nah, I don't either.

I'm, I'm just wanting somebody to tell me how I could improve.

"Peer counselor": Just wondering about you two, how you, you're students here, how do you feel about school? Have you ever had those feelings, ya know, that we've been talkin' about?

Yeah, I would very much like to be part of this group, and uh, I waited for an invitation from somebody to do that.

What do you do? Do you ever feel the same, like some of us?

"Peer counselor": Uh, I've had study problems from time to time, and I'm dealing with certain study problems right now. I know that I've learned alot from participating in these groups, yes, maybe in a little different way, than you are, but I have participated in the way in which you are participating too.

Are you gettin' better grades now than you were?

"Peer counselor": Uh, I'm getting better grades in some classes cause that's what I chose to do, uh, I think everybody's goals will be alittle bit different and my particular goal was to increase my grade in subjects that really interested me and keep the others just good enough, ya know, so that I'm gonna be able to stay here.

Maybe if you told us how you did it, maybe we could profit.

"Peer counselor": That, that's good and bad. Our solutions aren't your solutions, that'd be giving you a magical expectation to work towards and it just might not apply to you. It's more important that we get down to how you can cope with it.

How'd you feel about school when you were a freshman?

"Peer counselor": Uh, I was very anxious, I really didn't know what I wanted to do, and it took me a couple of years just feeling around to find my way.

You mean you were undecided?

"Peer counselor": Very.

So in other words we're gonna sit in here and talk and that's gonna help?

"Peer counselor": It can depending on what you get from each other, interactions.

Like, like we all have to come up with our own answers?

"Peer counselor": Well you don't have to, although eventually you will. It won't be giving you an answer, it will be giving you a way to get to an answer.

Male program coordinator: Now, remember to stay in your roles as juniors and seniors in peer training and take 10 or 15 minutes to discuss your critque, that is, what you just did in your training session where you role played an underachiever, how you felt, your reactions to group members, and so on. Okay go ahead.

Junior: Okay, how did you two feel working together, and uh, interacting with the group, and could you maybe evaluate each role that was played. How did you respond to it?

I found, well, first of all, like it was a great choice, cause we did have some interaction before, I don't know whether you two picked on that or not, but you could see some very strong alliances building, like between mine and Vern, very strong, and Junior just sorta sat back and was sorta watching and I imagine he would have gone for awhile before he would have gotten to some interaction but somebody challenged him, and you were sorta like laying off in the back, but toward the end I sorta felt you comin' in to the group more. I, I was glad that we finally did, Pat and I, eventually come in to the group, were invited in, which I didn't think was gonna happen.

I didn't know ya wanted to--I didn't know ya needed an invitation and when you said that I kinda thought, ya know, oh wow I missed the boat. I was s'posed to invite ya, I didn't know, ya were supposed to do that.

Well, I guess that--

I was kinda guessing it.

Yeah. Yeah, I didn't get that.

Yeah, and I wasn't, I wasn't really, ya know, thinkin' I'm gonna invite them into the group, I guess, my feeling was I really do want to know if your also students. Ya know, it sorta hit me, like your sorta like me in a way only your just two years beyond that maybe, and I guess it was important to know, well okay, what--what were some of the feelings you had and what you had to deal with when you were students.

I think I assumed that because they were the leaders, ya know, it's s'posed to be fun, ya know, they should be--

Achievers.

Yeah.

I really got inta my role, I felt yeah, actually I did this

You really, you really reacted to Junior a couple of times there, you could really feel it getting strong.

Yeah, my God I couldn't believe you did that.

Actually, I flunked out and transferred (much laughter) went to a party school.

I, I think I got more and more into it too, cause, I, ya know, it just, it brought back memories as I got into it a little bit more.

Uh-uh, I could see, uh, looking back, ya know, as a senior now, lookin' back on my, ya know, freshman year and how many things I went and ruined when the expectations of my parents were put on me, and now, you see, now, as a senior. I'm not, I'm not living at home anymore, I moved, transferred or what ever you wanna call it and I'm not home anymore, by my mother nor my father. I changed my major, but I feel, ya know, without, but I, I, I still, ya know, it helps to have everybody, ya know, share feelings, because it identifies so many different problems this way, and ya know, your's was a unique one to me.

Yeah.

I guess one of ya--well, I didn't know what kinda school it was but I was wondering, ya know, like, why were you, uh, in fashion design and

See, alota kids do go to like a university for two years and take their art courses; then they transfer into fashion design school.

Oh.

Yeah.

In this university, like

All I was, all I had in the back of my mind was, that here you were from a small town going into, ya know, competition in a large school and maybe you really didn't have to.

I kept wanting to tell you to go to a technical school.

I did too, I did too.

Junior: Uh, Pat, Sali and I started going off on a tangent and I know you cut me off right away, did you catch that?

Uh-um, yes I did, I thought this will go on and on, the sorority bit.

Uh-um.

Junior: This happens in every group.

Yeah, it was sorta a conflict alliance, ya know, really hard to break once they get

Did you

In fact, excuse me, I thought that a lot of the things could have gone on and on and on really, but participation was pretty even.. I don't know quite how it happened, I feel I cut you off every once in awhile, I don't know why that happens.

Yeah, we both started to talk at the same time.

A, a couple of times, in fact right now, ya know.

But, that will become, that does become necessary, to cut someone off all the time or

Or, it just goes on

Right.

Sali: Into chatty kinds of things that go absolutely no place, ya know.

Yeah, the one thing I thought was really good when you asked, uh, I think you asked Elaine if she identified with somebody in the group, ya know, sorta like, ya know, almost forcing them rather than, ya know, taking weeks and weeks for that to develop.

Yeah, and what happened to me, I, when you asked her, then I kept thinking about who am I most like in the group.

Sali: Did you?

Yeah, and I was kinda hoping somebody would ask me.

I wish you'd said that, because I thought about it, but then the subject got changed, ya know, and I let it go.

I, I was feeling quite a bit of frustration because I was trying to get some answers, I wanted to improve my grades and uh

I know you did.

It didn't seem like anybody was helpin' me do that.

Sali: Now, why don't you two go through the group and tell us how each one came across just briefly.

You mean describe the roles?

Sali: Just what ever you were feeling.

What were your feelings, like anger or was it, uh

Well, Al was very nonchalant, he was trying to come across like I'm controlled, in control and you could, you could really feel it, and uh, there was this certain air of certainty Mary had, you really didn't know

where, where she was, and uh, I think if it'd went a little longer she'd found something, and, your role fit very good and was very, it was, yeah, you really pulled back, but, but you weren't in control in the flippant way that Al was, and uh, your role was very good and you could tell that you were feeling the role, and uh, you were reacting to it very violently and you were reacting to the different people in the group, like the way you reacted to Vern.

He made me feel guilty.

Yeah, he did.

Yes, I felt he was demanding too, he made me a little angry and at the same time like I should have the answer, and uh, stubborn, a bit stubborn.

I was really playing, I know how ya feel, cause I was playing a person just like it, not myself, I wasn't playing myself, I was playin' another person, and uh, that, that's just the way he'd make me feel, like, uh, like I wasn't doing him any good.

Uh, I was making judgements, not real.

Oh, tell me, tell me, what judgements were you making?

Oh, that you were immature and you had to grow up, you were letting other people run your life and you better get out of that home control situation.

Did you like her parents?

O-o-oh! But, a, I was veing very judgemental with you and you bother me cause, ya know, you were so stubborn and persistent and demanding. You uh, would get on my nerves after while because there's just an awful lot of chatty, ya know, kinda thing, and uh, I do some of it myself and uh, I'm frustrating, going no place kind of thing, so I felt frustrated kinds of things. I, I worried alittle about you John, I didn't know, ya know, if I was talking too much.

Yeah, well, I sorta felt that for awhile, I felt that there was, I don't know I was catching some nonverbal clues that you were feeling anxious and felt that you were picking up too much of the

Uh-um, that's exactly how I was feelin', and, and yet

Cause you kept looking, you kept looking over with these looks of, waiting for an alliance to develop, so--so I can give you a little support.

Junior: Sali and I have that so much, that we don't, if we couldn't look at each other, we'd be just gone, we'd be shot because through all these sessions, now, we sat across from each other almost the whole time and like, uh, if I couldn't look at her I'd just be lost, even just for a quick glance, while we're going through the sessions.

Resistance from you, a certain amount of distain, sophostication bothered me. Didn't know where you are, question mark.

Junior: Yeah, yeah, well, I was trying to play a very confused, ya know, like

Not knowing, right?

Junior: Not knowing how come I didn't do well, ya know, and kinda wanting to do better, but just very confused and unsure of where I was at.

I sorta caught an undercurrent with you about reaction to your parents, that you were trying to really push that you were self-determining and you had your own way, and

Independence.

Independent.

Junior: Well, I guess the point that can be made now is, like Sali and I found out, maybe what you two found out, when you're in a group. Her and I often would catch completely different things from the same person, we feel completely different, and its really that

That, that it was okay to feel different.

Yeah, there's a kindness about you, ya know, but it just fits your face, it's just kinda soft and kind, a comfortable person to be in a group with. Steady, and kinda slow, but in a good solid way.

Well, I guess we can just sorta talk about anything.

Junior: Okay, now you can just ask us anything, questions to answer.

Anything you want.

Junior: Anything.

We're back in life.

Junior: Yeah.

What about the people out there?

Pardon?

Junior, why don't you get the tape recorder?

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